

# Questions and Answers: 2009 Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Legislation<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction: What is Florida-Friendly Landscaping?

Florida's increasing urbanization, coastal development, and population growth continue to tax water resources. Per capita water use ranges from 124 to 150 gallons per day with more than 50% of residential water used outside. (See <http://abe.ufl.edu/mdukes/pdf/irrigation-efficiency/Haley-FL-residential-irrig-JID.pdf> for details of a limited-scope study.)

Homeowners' association (HOA) covenants governing landscape design and maintenance can have a significant, adverse impact on the environment, but by encouraging the transformation of conventional landscapes to Florida-Friendly landscapes, HOAs and homeowners can conserve water, protect the environment, and allow a wide range of aesthetic choices.

UF/IFAS offers numerous resources—such as model Florida-Friendly covenants, conditions, and restrictions—to

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help HOAs and homeowners work together to find their niche in the Florida-Friendly landscape continuum.

See the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ website for a one-stop, online information kit for HOAs and property managers at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/community\\_association\\_kit.htm](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/community_association_kit.htm). The website also includes a list of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ considerations for architectural review boards.

## Legislative Definition

The definition of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ in Florida Statutes section 373.185 (adopted in 2009 in Senate Bill 2080) addresses “quality landscapes that conserve water, protect the environment, are adaptable to local conditions, and are drought tolerant. The principles of such landscaping include planting the right plant in the right place, efficient watering, appropriate fertilization, mulching, attraction of wildlife, responsible management of yard pests, recycling yard waste, reduction of stormwater runoff, and waterfront protection. Additional components include practices such as landscape planning and design, soil analysis, the appropriate use of solid waste compost, minimizing the use of irrigation, and proper maintenance.”

## Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program Summary Definition

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ is the application of science-based landscape practices to help design and maintain attractive and sustainable landscapes. The nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ begin with using the right plant in the right place to minimize the need for supplemental water, fertilizer, and pesticides.

Turfgrasses as well as native and non-native plants all can have useful and beneficial places in Florida-Friendly landscapes, provided they are planted in the right place and are maintained according to the other eight key principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™: watering efficiently, fertilizing appropriately, mulching responsibly and correctly, attracting wildlife, managing yard pests responsibly, recycling yard waste, reducing stormwater runoff, and protecting the waterfront.

## The Look of a Florida-Friendly Landscape

A typical Florida-Friendly landscape provides a diversity of vegetation appropriate to the conditions of a yard or site and may include turfgrass and landscaped beds with trees, shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers. Almost any landscape can be Florida-Friendly if it's designed and cared

for according to the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles described above.

The overriding goals of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program are to conserve water, preserve natural resources, and reduce water pollution. As defined by law, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program promotes quality landscapes that are properly designed and maintained. Nuisance, poorly maintained, and unkempt landscapes are not considered Florida-Friendly.

For more information about Florida-Friendly landscapes, visit <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

## Homeowners' Association Review Boards and Florida-Friendly Landscaping

1. **Q.** What legal action does an HOA have for homeowners who proceed with a project without going through the approval process?

**A.** The amendments to Florida Statutes section 373.185, et seq., have not changed the review approval process for HOAs. Check with the HOA board about its process.

2. **Q.** Does the new law allow homeowners to retrofit their yards by removing turfgrass and installing Florida-Friendly plants without HOA permission?

**A.** The amendments to Florida Statutes section 373.185, et seq., have not changed the review approval process for HOAs. If deed restrictions or covenants require HOA approval for landscape modifications, then homeowners still need approval from HOAs. Additionally, please note that a Florida-Friendly landscape includes both non-native and native plants and turfgrass as long as the plants and turfgrass match site conditions.

3. **Q.** What, if any, restrictions on landscaping are permitted?

**A.** It depends on the HOA. An HOA may restrict landscapes that contain only rocks and gravel, artificial turf, or mulch, which are not promoted by Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. HOAs also may impose reasonable restrictions on the placement and appearance of rain barrels, compost bins, and specialty gardens.

For a list of considerations for architectural review boards to use when developing Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ guidelines for communities, see *What to Consider for*



*Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guidelines* [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/ARB\\_FFL\\_consideration\\_guidelines03\\_15\\_2011.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/ARB_FFL_consideration_guidelines03_15_2011.pdf).

Each HOA may use the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/index.html>) to develop its own standards, but the standards should reflect the following local considerations:

- The effectiveness of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ is at least specific to plant hardiness zones and communities, and perhaps even to sites. Each site has its own characteristics, such as unique soils, moisture conditions, and light, so individual communities must take into account the local growing conditions. County Extension agents can provide information.
- Each community expresses its own personality through the style of its landscaping. One size does not fit all.
- Local landscaping ordinances may vary.

**4. Q.** Does the bill address common property owned by the HOA?

**A.** No, but the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program recommends that the HOA set an example for homeowners by following Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles in common areas. This includes using only those professionals who are trained and certified in the *Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources by the Green Industries* (see [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP\\_publications.htm](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP_publications.htm)) to maintain common areas.

**5. Q.** What does the new law specifically require of homeowners and landscape maintenance companies?

**A.** Homeowners: The amendments to Florida Statutes section 373.185, et seq., have not changed the review approval process between homeowners and their HOAs. Homeowners are encouraged but not required to landscape in accordance with Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles, which offer numerous benefits, including an aesthetic lawn and savings in water and maintenance.

*Adopting a Florida-Friendly Landscape: Steps for Converting a Traditional Development Landscape to a Florida-Friendly Landscape* (see <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP39600.pdf>) may be helpful for both HOAs and homeowners. The publication describes a phased-in installation of a Florida-Friendly landscape to spread the effort over time and to protect aesthetics.

*Landscape maintenance companies:* Landscape maintenance professionals who apply fertilizer commercially are required to obtain a Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer Application from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services by 2014. To get this certificate, each green industry professional must be trained and must have received a Certificate of Completion from UF/IFAS and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in the Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources by the Green Industries (GI-BMP). The training program teaches professionals Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ maintenance practices. The GI-BMP manual, *Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources by the Green Industries*, can be found at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP\\_publications.htm](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP_publications.htm).

See “Maintenance” section below for more information.

**6. Q.** When will Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ design standards be provided?

**A.** While there is no prescription for a Florida-Friendly landscape, there are recommended Covenants, codes and restrictions, which were rewritten after the law passed, and example landscape designs HOAs may find helpful as they develop their own design standards:

- *Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Model Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions for New and Existing Community Associations*, (September 2010). [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/CCRs\\_Sept-20-2010\\_final.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/CCRs_Sept-20-2010_final.pdf)
- *Adopting a Florida-Friendly Landscape: Steps for Converting a Typical Development Landscape to a Florida-Friendly Landscape* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep396>
- *The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design*, 1st ed. (2010) [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN\\_Plant\\_Selection\\_Guide\\_v090110.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf)
- *Community ButterflyScaping: How to Move Beyond Butterfly Gardening to Create a Large-Scale Butterfly Habitat* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP42000.pdf>
- *What to consider for Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guidelines* [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/ARB\\_FFL\\_consideration\\_guidelines03\\_15\\_2011.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/ARB_FFL_consideration_guidelines03_15_2011.pdf)

Sample plant lists and designs for four Florida regions:

- *Florida-Friendly Landscaping Pattern Book: Sample Plant Lists and Designs for Four Florida Regions, USDA Hardiness Zones 8A and 8B, North Florida* [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL\\_Book\\_Zone\\_8A-8B\\_081610.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL_Book_Zone_8A-8B_081610.pdf)



- *Florida-Friendly Landscaping Pattern Book: Sample Plant Lists and Designs for Four Florida Regions, USDA Hardiness Zone 9A, North Central Florida* [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL\\_Book\\_Zone\\_9A\\_081610.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL_Book_Zone_9A_081610.pdf)
- *Florida-Friendly Landscaping Pattern Book: Sample Plant Lists and Designs for Four Florida Regions, USDA Hardiness Zone 9B, South Central Florida* [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL\\_Book\\_Zone\\_9B\\_081610.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL_Book_Zone_9B_081610.pdf)
- *Florida-Friendly Landscaping Pattern Book: Sample Plant Lists and Designs for Four Florida Regions, USDA Hardiness Zones 10A, 10B, and 11, South Florida* [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL\\_Book\\_Zone\\_10\\_081610.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FFL_Book_Zone_10_081610.pdf)

7. **Q.** Do review boards have the authority to tell homeowners what they can and cannot plant?

**A.** Yes, if the review board is permitted to do so through their covenants or deed restrictions. Florida-Friendly landscapes offer a range of planting, turfgrass, and mulching options. An HOA may specify the options available to homeowners so long as the plants, turfgrasses, and mulch are suited to site-specific conditions that reflect the “right plant, right place” principle of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™.

8. **Q.** If a new community is being developed, what requirements would the state, county, and local governing bodies require from them?

**A.** Model Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ ordinances are encouraged by the state for adoption by local governments. Consult local government for the status of its ordinance.

9. **Q.** What types of developments are considered extremely natural in terms of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™?

**A.** Appearance and the types of plants in communities do not solely define Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. Maintenance that adheres to Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ guidelines is essential. Maintenance practices designed to keep irrigation, fertilizer, and pesticides to a minimum need to be examined to characterize a landscape as Florida-Friendly.

10. **Q.** What is the status on local agencies contributing to some of the decision making regarding Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and requirements?

**A.** Consult local government for the status of ordinances.

11. **Q.** Is the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program designed for homeowners or commercial use?

**A.** The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program addresses homeowners, community associations (including HOAs), commercial and governmental properties, builders and developers, and commercial horticulture service providers. The principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ apply to all landscapes throughout the state.

12. **Q.** How does the new statute affect maintenance-free communities and common areas?

**A.** The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ legislation does not address maintenance-free communities or common areas.

13. **Q.** If a yard was recognized in the past as a Florida-Friendly landscape, do HOA restrictions apply?

**A.** Designation of a Florida-Friendly landscape may come as the result of a Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ checklist, which is used as an educational and promotional tool for the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program. To view the checklist, visit [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/FYN\\_Yard\\_Recognition\\_Checklist\\_2010.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/FYN_Yard_Recognition_Checklist_2010.pdf). HOA rules take precedence regardless of when the homeowner was awarded recognition. However, an HOA may not require a homeowner to abide by covenants or restrictions that are not Florida-Friendly.

14. **Q.** If a homeowner submits a landscape plan to his or her HOA that the HOA does not consider to be Florida-Friendly, what recourse does the homeowner have?

**A.** The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program recommends homeowners and HOAs work cooperatively to find mutually acceptable solutions. UF/IFAS and the Department of Environmental Protection can offer technical assistance and education but cannot advise any party of legal rights and cannot resolve disputes between HOAs and homeowners.

## Aesthetics and Florida-Friendly Landscaping Community Look

1. **Q.** How can a community conserve water and use less fertilizer but keep the community attractive and cohesive?

**A.** Some communities have developed long-term landscaping improvement plans. These plans guide changes made to the landscape and maintenance expenditures and can ensure the costs associated with change are spread over time. These plans also can be used to guide the landscaping



review process for homeowners, potentially reducing any conflict.

Follow these suggested steps to develop a Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ improvement plan:

- a. Conduct an assessment of existing plants. Some may stay, and others may need to be changed out. Regardless, converting to Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ can be done in phases.
- b. Consider replacing hard-to-maintain areas, such as small or narrow turf areas and areas where turfgrass is under stress, with better-adapted plant species.
- c. Consider replacing selected landscape plants with plants identified as Florida-Friendly (see *Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design* at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYNPlant\\_Selection\\_Guide\\_v090110.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYNPlant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf). Other suitable plants that are not listed but that meet site conditions may be used as long as they are not exotic, invasive plants.
- d. Review annuals and perennials used, and ensure they can be maintained with minimal inputs.
- e. Consider maintenance requirements when selecting plants and turfgrass. Select plants that require less maintenance.
- f. Be flexible—certain plants may not work in specific areas within the community. Allow substitutes that fit site conditions and work with community aesthetics.

For more information about how to convert a traditional yard to a Florida-Friendly yard, visit <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP39600.pdf>.

**2. Q.** What recourse do HOAs have if someone uses the new legislation to justify a landscape that is inconsistent with the neighborhood norm?

**A.** The HOA can adopt guidelines to address these issues and define aesthetics. Parameters such as the ratio of landscaped beds to turfgrass, the shape of the landscaped beds, and the vegetation within them can be included in the community's Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ plan.

For a list of considerations for architectural review boards to use when developing Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ guidelines for communities, see *What to Consider for Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guidelines* at <http://fyn>.

[ifas.ufl.edu/materials/ARB\\_FFL\\_consideration\\_guidelines03\\_15\\_2011.pdf](http://ifas.ufl.edu/materials/ARB_FFL_consideration_guidelines03_15_2011.pdf).

**3. Q.** Do homeowners have the right to keep a traditional landscape?

**A.** Yes. No one is required to convert to a Florida-Friendly landscape. However, the legislature finds Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ to be an essential part of water conservation, water quality protection, and restoration planning. Communities and homeowners must comply with water restrictions. Implementing the “right plant, right place” concept minimizes landscape maintenance and can help homeowners conserve water.

## **Rocks, Artificial Turfgrass, and Rubber Mulch**

**1. Q.** Is it permissible for homeowners to replace their yards with rocks, artificial turf, and rubber mulch?

### **A. Rocks**

Florida-Friendly does not promote a landscape of all rocks or the use of artificial turf and rubber mulch. Such materials increase heat and may result in loss of habitat, or in habitat that does not support wildlife. If an HOA review board allows any rocks, Florida-Friendly recommends they be used in a reasonable way in landscapes that have plants. They also can be used for accents around heat-tolerant plants and trees, in rain gardens, or to lessen the impact of rainfall from roof overhangs. This last may be especially important as woody mulch along the foundation may attract termites, and rock will protect the soil from erosion without floating away or attracting pests.

### **Artificial/Synthetic Turfgrass**

The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program does not consider artificial turf to be a Florida-Friendly product.

Synthetic turf surfaces were found to have substantially higher surface temperatures than natural turfgrasses. Surface temperatures of synthetic turf can be 93°C(199.4°F) on a day when air temperature is 37°C(98.6°F). Heat transfer from the surface can contribute to physiological stress that may result in health-related problems (McNitt and Petrunak 2006). Especially when the synthetic turf fields were newer, rubber granules often contained polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) at levels above health-based soil standards. The levels of PAHs generally appeared to decline as the field aged. However, the decay trend may be



complicated by adding new rubber granules to compensate for the loss of the material.

Zinc contents were found to far exceed the soil limit (Zhang, Han, and Crain 2008). A limited scoping level field-monitoring study of synthetic turf fields by the US Environmental Protection Agency was conducted in two athletic fields and one playground to test metals and volatile organic compounds. It was revealed that metal concentrations were variable in a given site and between sites, and lead concentrations were low. Although there are no standards for lead in recycled tire material or synthetic turf, average concentrations were well below the EPA standard for lead in soil. It was suggested that it is not possible to reach comprehensive conclusions without consideration of additional data (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2009).

Healthy lawns clean and cool the air by absorbing carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen, and collecting dust and dirt. They filter stormwater runoff, facilitate groundwater recharge, and reduce erosion, glare, and noise. (For more information about turfgrass, visit [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP\\_publications.htm](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP_publications.htm).)

### Rubber Mulch

Recycled rubber mulch is not recommended for plant beds. Vegetation and organic mulch provide for a richer and more diverse landscape. A mix of vegetation attracts beneficial wildlife. Mulch made from tree bark or other plant material contributes nutrients to the soil as it breaks down.

**2. Q.** Is it permissible for homeowners to place rocks on their property between their houses and a neighbor's house to eliminate an irrigation zone to save water?

**A.** The HOA review board may need to approve this landscape modification. From a water filtration process, rocks are not necessarily more Florida-Friendly than turfgrass. Turfgrass filters runoff in a water conveyance area, or swale, between the two properties where the elevation is lower. However, if the turfgrass is not performing well and velocity of the water coming from the home sites is causing erosion, an alternative groundcover, including rocks, should be considered.

### Ponds and Easements

**1. Q.** Is it permissible for homeowners to replace turfgrass that extends from behind their houses to the water's edge of a community's retention pond?

**A.** Check with the HOA for landscaping guidelines. The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program recommends the establishment of a 10-foot, maintenance-free buffer next to any water body—no fertilizer, no irrigation, no pesticides, and no mowing. Additionally, homeowners cannot alter stormwater systems (e.g., stormwater swales, culverts, or ditches) without proper permission.

**2. Q.** Do homeowners have the right to make Florida-Friendly those portions of their lawn identified as “easements” or “setbacks” that they are obligated to maintain with their property?

**A.** Yes, homeowners may make these changes if they do not encroach on the function of the easement and as long as they adhere to other appropriate guidelines. For example, homeowners should not place perennial bushes or trees in a travel or utility easement, but the use of a drought-tolerant groundcover or turfgrass that enables them to avoid irrigating an area that is difficult to water may be quite reasonable.

## Plants and Turfgrass Plants

**1. Q.** Is there a plant list available?

**A.** *The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design*, 1st ed. (2010), provides information on hundreds of plants (see [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN\\_Plant\\_Selection\\_Guide\\_v090110.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf)). However, just because the plant is listed on the Florida-Friendly plant list does not mean it performs well in all areas. The plant must match site conditions, including soil, light, moisture, and fertility needs, to survive without excess irrigation, fertilizer, and pesticides.

**2. Q.** What type of groundcover can homeowners use? Can they use sweet potato or other groundcovers? Are limitations imposed on types of groundcover to replace St. Augustinegrass?

**A.** Check with the HOA. The HOA might have guidelines on the type or types of groundcovers that can be used. If no specific guidelines are provided by the HOA, use the Florida-Friendly plant list to identify groundcovers that correspond to existing site conditions.

**3. Q.** Does the Florida-Friendly plant palette include any Class 1 invasive species or poisonous plants?

**A.** Class 1 invasive species are not on the list. Some plants that may irritate the skin are on the list, as many plants



incorporate distasteful chemicals or toxins in their tissues as a defense against insects.

Keep in mind that some Florida-Friendly plants are not on the list. To be Florida-Friendly, the plant must match site conditions and must not be an exotic invasive.

4. **Q.** “Right plant, right place” looks like it can vary from yard to yard. Are HOAs going to be trained in how to determine this?

**A.** The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program has resources available to assist communities. See the list of resources at the end of this publication or contact the local Extension office (see <http://www.solutionsforyourlife.com/map/>).

5. **Q.** The Florida-Friendly plant list is very long. Is it possible to reduce this list to a smaller number of plants from which to choose?

**A.** Please consult [Floridayards.org](http://Floridayards.org) or a local county Extension agent.

## Turfgrass

1. **Q.** Is turfgrass Florida-Friendly?

**A.** Yes, as long as it matches site conditions and is not maintained with excessive irrigation, pesticides, and fertilizer.

2. **Q.** What types of turfgrass are Florida-Friendly?

**A.** Five types of turfgrass (two classifications of St. Augustinegrass and several cultivars) are considered Florida-Friendly as long as the choices match the site conditions.

For details on the types of turfgrass, see page 99 of *The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design*, 1st ed. (2010) at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN\\_Plant\\_Selection\\_Guide\\_v090110.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_v090110.pdf). See also page 13 of *The Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Handbook* at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/FYN\\_Handbook\\_vSept09.pdf](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/materials/FYN_Handbook_vSept09.pdf).

3. **Q.** Can HOAs require St. Augustinegrass for lawn turfgrass?

**A.** It can be required just like any other Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ turfgrass if it is the right plant for the right place.

4. **Q.** Since five kinds of turfgrass are listed on the Florida-Friendly plant list, can homeowners plant whichever one they choose?

**A.** The homeowner first may need to go to the HOA review board for landscape approval and should select only the turfgrass that is appropriate for the site.

5. **Q.** Can an HOA require a homeowner to keep turfgrass green year-round?

**A.** No. When turfgrass slows or stops growing, it becomes lighter or turns brown. This natural phenomenon occurs especially during cooler winter months or extended periods of drought. If turfgrass is fertilized during dormancy, it cannot use the nutrients efficiently or it cannot use them at all. Therefore, there is a greater chance the nutrients will find their way into nearby water bodies through runoff or leaching when any residue percolates through the ground.

For information about fertilizer, consult *The Lawn Fertilizer Toolbox* at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep435>.

6. **Q.** Is there a percentage of coverage for landscape beds versus turfgrass?

**A.** The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program and the 2009 Florida-Friendly legislation do not specify a ratio of landscape beds to turfgrass. The 2009 Florida-Friendly legislation requires that water management districts develop a model landscape ordinance specifying the percentage of landscape beds to irrigated turfgrass in new developments. Counties are encouraged to adopt these model landscape ordinances.

## Maintenance

1. **Q.** Do Florida-Friendly landscapes require less or more maintenance than a traditional landscape?

**A.** By following the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles—especially choosing the right plant for the right place—irrigation, fertilization, pesticide use, and other maintenance needs, such as pruning and weeding, should be minimal. Proper long-term maintenance is critical to keeping irrigation, fertilizer, and pesticide inputs to a minimum, which in turn helps conserve water and protect water quality.

For a list of landscape professionals certified in Best Management Practices for the Green Industries, visit [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/certification\\_lists/cert\\_county\\_name.shtml](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/certification_lists/cert_county_name.shtml).



2. **Q.** Does Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ achieve any cost savings?

**A.** A condominium community in St. Augustine Beach converted to Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and reduced outdoor water use by 10 million gallons between 2006 and 2010. The community also saved \$6,500 in one year on landscape maintenance. Reduced irrigation resulted in fewer pest problems and substantial savings in electricity costs to run the well pumps. The Florida-Friendly landscape suited the aesthetic of the community. While condominiums are governed differently than HOAs, the principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ remain the same and can apply to any community.

For other success stories on savings, visit the *Creating Florida-Friendly Communities* e-newsletter at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter/CFFC\\_e-newsletter.htm](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter/CFFC_e-newsletter.htm).

3. **Q.** Can homeowners still fertilize their lawns?

**A.** Yes, but homeowners should follow UF/IFAS recommendations. For information on fertilizer application rates, see page 29 of the *Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources by the Green Industries* at [http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP\\_publications.htm](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/GI-BMP_publications.htm).

4. **Q.** Turfgrass requires special cutting equipment. If HOAs allow homeowners to choose any type of turfgrass they want, the HOA may not be able to manage a bulk contract. How should this be handled?

**A.** Most cutting equipment has adjustable blades, so this should not be too much of a concern. Of concern are the types of chemicals used on various types of turfgrass. The suite used for St. Augustinegrass, for example, is different than the suite for bahiagrass. Landscape maintenance contracts need to reflect this.

## Resources for Florida-Friendly Landscaping

Contact a UF/IFAS county Extension office for more information, or see below for helpful resources.

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